

March 17, 2013

Good Morning Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and esteemed Members of the Public Health Committee. I'm William F. Meyer 3rd (Bill) of Westport and I'm here to testify in support of Raised Bill No. 6645.

In January of 1991 my 88 year old father, who was suffering from 5 cancer operations asked me to help him terminate his life. At the time he was living alone in a three bedroom home in West Hartford and still driving a car and had keen mind, but the cancer was spreading. It was apparent he would have to enter a nursing home in about 4 months. Because he had been so active in West Hartford community activities, the town council designated April 3, 1986 as Bill Meyer appreciation day. In his words, he happily decided to terminate his life before he reached a decadent condition of helplessness. To try and talk him out of this action a meeting was arranged with his doctor of 25 years and my minister. Both agreed from a medical stand point and theological position because of his desire to live active he was doing the right thing. As carefully arranged, on July 31, 1991 I slipped a plastic bag over his head and the next morning his doctor and the police arrived and pronounced his passing.

As I promised my Father, I became a spokesman for the Hemlock Society and gave speeches on death with dignity. In August of 1994, in a 4 page feature article in Connecticut Magazine I related how I helped my Father pass away and the West Hartford police arrested me with a second degree Manslaughter charge(possible 10 years in prison). This became a national case as I appeared on 60 Minutes with Mike Wallace, on the Today show, and on the front page of the New York Times, plus countless other newspaper articles and T.V. appearances. The Westport Unitarian Church ran a rally and 250 people attended. Several politicians and ministers spoke on my behalf. The Westport News ran an editorial asking readers to write support letters to Superior Court Judge Thomas Miano and over 300 were sent, including letters from 7 ministers, 5 lawyers. 60 letters came from my UCC church and at least 40 from Catholics.

On December 14, 1994 at a pre-trial hearing in Hartford in which two ministers were among the five speakers, I was awarded accelerated rehabilitation. In the letters written to the judge "backing me" I was amazed at how many people experienced the agony and extreme discomfort of watching a sick loved one slowly die. When my father told my college freshman daughter about his plans to take his life her answer was "Grandpa, you've led a full life, you are doing the right thing I don't want you to suffer."

Darien High School has an annual half-day where all students must attend two classes on some current "social concern" subject. 60 attended my class on end of life choices and it appeared that every student approved of my decision for my Father. Dartmouth College invited me to lead a discussion on assisted suicide and 400 students and professors attended. Also, 100% were for giving people the option for end of life decisions. Certainly shortening a life is not for everybody, but people should have the option, as they do in the states of Oregon and Washington. My Father always said, if someone says to you have a good day and you like them, say back HAVE A GOOD LIFE! So all you legislators have a GOOD LIFE. Please call me if you have any questions

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